

Abolition Lab

Instructors:

Lenora Hanson (they/them) (English)

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Description

This course will explore both the theory and practice of what Ruth Wilson Gilmore, Mariame Kaba, the Abolition Journal Collective, Angela Davis, The Revolution Starts at Home zine and many, many others call Abolition. This term refers to the abolition of police, prisons, borders, forms of surveillance and control that rely on state sponsored forms of violence but also the more ingrained and unconscious punitive structures that shape our own social relations and daily habits. We will work to keep multiple and intersecting scales of abolition at the center of the course, including the space of the classroom up to global carceral connections that bind the borders of the U.S., Mexico, Israel, and South Africa. Along with readings about abolition, we will take our own campus as a site of critical inquiry and mapping. Together, we will develop skills in visual technologies used by groups like Forensic Architecture and SITU to depict how state violence operates through institutions. We will also develop skills in historical archaeology that help us to understand how the development of our campus has impacted communities that are not counted as part of the “NYU community.” How might we imagine an education that resists the terms set by the university’s institutional framework and transforms our relationship to the spaces we inhabit? The end product of our collaborative, project based course will be collectively designed imaginings of what harm reduction and transformative justice might look like on a campus without borders and police.

Course Requirements

Because the final project in this course will emerge from our weekly discussions and research-based workshops together, we will decide on the form that it will take collectively and processually. We will divide concrete features of the project into manageable sections for each participant. Your presentation for the course at the end of the semester will be on the section of the final project for which you are responsible. Your Weekly Brainstorming Writing will be a place for developing your ideas for and interests in a final project and we will use these to collaboratively design that project.

Participation	15%
Presentation	20%
Weekly Brainstorming Writing (500-800 words)	20%
Collaborative Final Project Outline	20%
Collaborative Final Project	25%

Learning Objectives

- To learn about the histories, theories, and practices of abolition
- To develop practical ways to implement abolition at intersecting scales of the classroom, the city, and global sites
- To become familiar with visualization and geo-spatializing technologies used by contemporary human rights groups (ie Forensic Architecture, Palestine Open Maps, the Mapping Project, SITU etc.)
- To work collaboratively in imagining and proposing an abolitionist project/projects for our campus

Unit One: Introductions to Abolition

Week 1

Abolition Journal “If You’re New to Abolition Study Guide” (2020)

“Coffee not Cops” Zine (2022)

Prison Research Education Action Project (1976) ‘Nine Perspectives for Prison Abolitionists’ from *Instead of Prisons: A Handbook for Abolitionists*

Week 2

Harsha Walia, *Border and Rule: Global Migration, Capitalism, and the Rise of Racist Nationalism* [selected chapters] (2021)

Naomi Paik, “Abolitionist Futures and the US Sanctuary Movement,” *Race & Class* (2017)

Joy James podcast episode: “The Plurality Abolitionism”

groundings.simplecast.com/episodes/joy-james (2022)

Week 3

Workshop/Brainstorming Session: Reflect on the materials we have read over the past two weeks. Bring in any mix of lists, maps, pictures, recordings, social media activity, news articles, etc. that help us to see our campus through the lens these readings have given us. We will work to compose these into a provisional “cognitive map” for an abolitionist view of NYU.

Unit Two: Abolitionist Research / Building our Project

Week 4

Radical History Review, “Forum 6.1 Abolitionist Study and Struggle In and Beyond the University” [selected chapters] (2022)

“Abolitionist Group Makes Dining Hall Free at UC Davis,”

<https://itsgoingdown.org/davis-dining-hall-free-2022/>.

Week 5

Eddie Cole, “The Racist Roots of Campus Policing,” *Washington Post* (2021)

Roderick Ferguson, *We Demand: The University and Student Protests*, [selected chapters] (2017)

Radical History Review, "It's Time for CUNY to Say Goodbye to Cops" (2020)
GSOC website, "Why is Cops Off Campus a Workplace and Safety Concern?" (2021)

Week 6

NYU *Annual Security and Fire Report* (2022)

Washington Square News, "Opinion: NYU Needs to Better Respond to Crime" (2023)

Curbed, "The 8-Hour East Village Standoff Against a Homeless Encampment Sweep" (2022)

NYU News, "Mutual Aid org. Fights Police Presence in Washington Square Park" (2022)

**Discussion with Cops Off Campus Organizers at NYU and CUNY

Week 7

Workshop with SITU

**In preparation for our workshop with SITU, develop a list of research questions we have about our campus and campus policing and how we would like to render the effects of policing in visual form. Also review the SITU Research Project "Documenting NYPD's Suppression of Peaceful Protest in the Bronx."

Unit Three: Open Borders / Global Campus

Week 9

"Other Side of Wall Street" Walking Tour with Black Gotham

The first of five in the core stories of the Black Gotham Experience starts in 1643 with the beginning of a small town known as Land of the Blacks right outside the Dutch colony of New Amsterdam. By 1655, the Land of the Blacks was over twice the size of SoHo today and it continued to exist after the English take the island from the Dutch, making it the first free Black community in New York. This walking tour explains how this community started and how it continued to exist into the 18th century.

Week 10

E. Tendayi Achiume, "Migration as Decolonization" (2019)

CrimethInc Collective, "No Wall They Can Build" Zine (ND)

Harsha Walia, *A World Without State Borders* (TedX talk)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HOYgLiXCOKE>

Postcommodity Collective, *Repellent Fence* [indigenous artist collective]

http://postcommodity.com/Repellent_Fence_English.html (2015)

Week 11

NYU "The University as Sanctuary"

NYU *Local*, "What is a Sanctuary Campus and Why Isn't NYU One?" (2017)

Indigenous Action Media, "Accomplices Not Allies: Abolishing the Ally Industrial Complex" (2014)

Harsha Walia, *Undoing Border Imperialism*, [selected chapters] (2013)

Week 12

Rebecca Comay, et al, *A Report on MLA Members' Visit to Palestine* (2016)

Andrew Ross, "Israel Was Built on the Backs of Palestinian Laborers," *The Nation* (2019)

Palestine Open Maps, <https://palopenmaps.org/>

Middle East Eye, "NYU Urged to Shut Down Tel Aviv Campus after Amnesty Report in Israel" (2022)

Larissa Sansour, *Nation Estate* [9-min film] (2012)

Week 13

Presentations and Discussion

Week 14

Presentations and Discussion